In the specification:

At page 5, line 19 please delete the reference number "120" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 112 --.

At page 5, line 20 please delete the reference number "130" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 114 --.

At page 8, line 3 please delete the reference number "108" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 208 --.

At page 8, line 7 please delete the reference number "218" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 228 --.

At page 8, line 16 please delete the reference number "218" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 228 --.

At page 9, line 8 please delete the reference number "108" and substitute therefor the reference number -- 208 --.

In the claims:

Please cancel claims 1 - 11 without prejudice.

12 (new). A system for monitoring and transmitting utility status via a universal communications interface, comprising:

an input interface operative to receive a utility status signal from a utility meter;

a processor functionally coupled to the input interface for receiving the utility status signal from the input interface and operative to generate a status message based on the utility status signal;

a universal communications interface functionally coupled to the processor and configurable for communicating with a plurality of different types of communication devices, each different type of communication device operative to communicate with a receiving device via one of a plurality of different communication mediums;

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a slot functionally coupled to the universal communications interface and configured to interchangeably connect one of the plurality of different types of communication devices;

wherein the processor communicates with the universal communications interface to determine which one of the plurality of different types of communication devices is connected to the slot; and

wherein the processor formats the status message into a format compatible with the connected communication device and transmits the formatted status message to the universal communications interface for transmission to the connected communications device.

13 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the plurality of different communication mediums are selected from the group consisting of radio frequency waves, infrared waves, telephone lines, cable lines, fiber optic lines, satellite links, and power lines.

14 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the input signal comprises an analog wave form; and

wherein the input interface comprises an analog-to-digital converter operative to convert the analog wave form into a digital signal representing the utility status.

15 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the input signal is received from a connect/disconnect monitor of the utility meter.

16 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the input signal is received from a tamper detection monitor of the utility meter.

17 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the input signal is received from a voltage monitor of the utility meter.

18 (new). The system of claim 12, wherein the input signal is received from a current monitor of the utility meter.